



Intercultural and interdenominational
MEETING POINTS

A proposition
and 80 prayers
and texts for peace

Federico Mayor Zaragoza's prologue

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Dignity and justice for all of us

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Prólogo

"I find myself fleeing from me, when it's with me I find myself"
José Bergamin

How difficult it is to get close to our deep well!

Time for reflection, to elaborate our own responses, including those to the essential questions.

Time, therefore, to be ourselves, to be free, to get rid of external burdens and things that drag us down.

Time to really exist, not just to be present.

Time to live aware of the incomparable greatness of the human race, capable of unbridled creation, imagination, innovation, and getting ahead.

As well as the astonishment of existence, of the inescapable fact of being alive, the different abilities of each person: the ability to meditate, discover, innovate, create, do the unexpected; this is our hope.

The ability to seek out and find new paths, to invent them, to sow tirelessly, without giving up, seeds for the future that make up —step by step, grain by grain— another possible world, the one we dream of for the future generations, our supreme commitment.

Julián Marías said that it is very difficult to observe what we see every day. We need to learn to see beyond the specific points that the media highlight. We need to see the "the invisible ones" to be able to convert the impossible of today into the possible of tomorrow.

It is about creating a "new way of looking". A new way of seeing others, a transparent, lucent way. "Teacher, help me to look!" a little Uruguayan girl anxiously asked when she got off a bus and saw the sea for the first time; she asked for help to contemplate such greatness. Helping people to see, knowing how to look at each other, passengers in the same ship going to the same destination. The "new look" of Baketik, from Arantzazu, with its design for peace and conflict resolution, replacing force with the word.

We need to live each moment intensely. It's a time of action, of not sleeping, of rising up.

It is time to know how to distinguish what is important and what is not. Aware of the urgent need, to place ethical values at the heart of our daily behaviour.

We need to be well warned, alert, on our toes. Not indifferent spectators or absent-minded recipients any more, but actors and mobilisers.

This is the basic distinction that Jonan Fernandez sets out to inspire us within this book, "Meeting Points" between cultures and beliefs. A proposition and 80 prayers and texts for peace.

This book by Baketik is one of the few texts —which also reflects its unusual author— in which introspection and the will to find domains of convergence and dialogue is based on the courageous exploration, first and foremost, of oneself, of the inevitable and fantastic reality of exis-

tence. And from the tremulous experience of being alive, four basic things to be learnt: the limitation of the human condition (and its infinite greatness); a sense of gratefulness (and of being demanding); of listening to one's own conscience (a prerequisite for all other attitudes and actions); and the meaning of human dignity (the basic notion, the 'hard core' of any chance of understanding, comprehension or friendship).

After some splendid prayers for peace we are presented with some 'universal texts' that conclude with "peace and love". The book could not end in any other way, because love is the key word, the light that shows the routes that we tenaciously wish to offer as a heritage to future generations: "...we cannot delay in knocking down the high fences that surround us, the gates that hold back what is left of love on Earth"...

Finding places for people to come together, to converse, where we can gradually replace the use of force with the use of the word. Miquel Martí i Pol reminds us: "I have nothing now, just my voice... but our mission is to speak", "...We should say the unspeakable, that which does not want to be heard, if we want to live with our heads held high and look our children in the eye"...

Avoid our daily routine overcoming us; avoid giving up, day by day, bit by bit, our diversity and independence. The human condition, creative and free, right on the edge of certainty and uncertainty. In Teotihuacan I wrote: ... "I know nothing, except that I am. Except that I am here, shuddering. Except that I see, think, and tremble... I am nothing, except that I know, perplexed and confused, that when Man emerged... earth's conscience, the sea's conscience, conscience of the wind and the clouds... the universe was filled with light, with creators"...

Each moment of the mystery of life —perhaps the miracle of life— well used, lived to the full: ... "When the twilight falls I will tell you if I lived the day as I want to when I get up. I will tell you if I was able not to accept what is unacceptable, if I was able to seek out and find new paths and stop walking along the old ones; if I was able to give, and give of myself; if I was able to find short cuts towards love"...

Yes, everything is possible. The ability to create is our supreme asset. It is our hope. As José Ángel Valente brilliantly wrote: "Do not chain anyone to the foot of never".

Our wings, without burdens or things that drag us down, to fly at the height of human dignity. This beautiful book helps us to see the runway lights in the fog so that we can take off.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

Introduction to the book

This book is sponsored and published by Baketik, a peace centre established on 14 October 2006 in Arantzazu (Oñati, Basque Country). Two concepts come together in this centre: peace and ethics. Its work is the result of this union. Its goals are, first, to go deeper into ethics as a basis for peace and the constructive resolution of conflicts, and second, to disseminate the conclusions of this process as widely as possible.

The inspiring force behind this project were the Franciscans of the Sanctuary of Arantzazu, who set up the Arantzazu Baketik Foundation. The Franciscan inspiration that drives the work of the centre includes a determination that the centre should be secular, non-denominational, independent, functionally diverse and open to lay people and believers of different faiths alike.

By delegation of the Franciscans themselves, a governing council that is open to the different sensibilities that are found in Basque society oversees the Centre for Peace. It also has an advisory committee, made up of Federico Mayor Zaragoza, Miguel Herrero y Rodríguez de Miñón, José Saramago, Iñaki Gabilondo, Daniel Innerarity, Victoria Camps, Jose Antonio Marina, Matteo Zuppi and Massimo Reschiglian.

Baketik is located in Arantzazu, a place of exceptional natural beauty located near the town of Oñati in the historical territory of Gipuzkoa, where the sanctuary and the Franciscan presence on the site go back more than 500 years. Apart from its deeply religious significance and its impressive natural surroundings, Arantzazu is a very important focal point for Basque society for a number of reasons; it is a place of shelter and solace in its longing for peace; for the effort it has put into the protection of the Basque language; because it is the gateway to symbolic mountain ascents; for its bond with the world of art and culture; and because it has been home to very distinguished poets, musicians and painters. It is important to note, for example, that artists and architects such as Saénz de Oiza, Laorga, Oteiza, Chillida, Basterretxea, Eulate, Lucio Muñoz and Xabier Egaña have taken part in the construction and design of different aspects and components of the new basilica over the last 50 years.

It is against this background that the Baketik Centre for Peace is situated. Specifically, it is in Gandiaga Topagunea, a municipal building near the basilica that was designed as a place for meeting and conversation. The idea for this book was born here, where a context of Franciscan spirituality, the desire for peace, an environment of artistic and cultural creation and the raw impact of overwhelming natural beauty have come together. Arantzazu is set up and looks to the future as a meeting place and a refuge for people who are looking further or deeper within themselves. It is for people who are looking for this deeper insight through spirituality, nature, art, culture, solidarity and peace.

This environment led to the birth of an intuition, and it is where the gestation of this book begins. It is a process that, once started, has taken on a life of its own, and goes in ways and directions that were not anticipated at the outset and that give the original idea a new shape. From the first moment, the instinct was to publish and disseminate a book that helps us to understand the world and its complexity through the sublimation that various cultures and religions have made of peace and human dignity.

We live in a world where, at the local as much as at the global level, coexistence vies with the notion of "the other". This meeting with "the other" not only occurs in airports, on journeys or in international politics. It also happens in our local neighbourhood, at school, at work, out on the street or within the family. In the world, we swing between the "clash" and the "alliance" of civilizations. In our own localities we meet people of other cultures, identities, religions and customs. At the global as well as the local level, coexistence, respect for identity, human rights and peace are all at stake. The obstacles to achieving these aims are often based on lack of understanding, prejudice, ignorance and distance from "the others".

What can overcome this obstacle are understanding, rapprochement, openness and respect for "the others". One way to take on board and understand "the other" may be to know how each religion and culture has imagined, desired, pleaded and fought for peace, from the deepest parts of their being. It is about understanding the written evidence of it all, through poems, prayers and supplications of different cultures and religions.

It is about realising how similar we are in spite of our differences. From this experience, we should be more receptive to listening and empathising with those who are not like us. In short, it is about seeing and considering ourselves as fellow human beings. This is how the project began, based on this intuition and these reflections. The initial objective is to publish and distribute a book in different languages that brings together interdenominational and intercultural texts and prayers for peace, with wide distribution at local level and the aim that it can also be disseminated and become known internationally.

MEETING POINTS

One idea leads to another and all this has coincided with a process that is being developed by Baketik as well as by the Arantzazu Sanctuary. We are working around the need to find reference points that identify a meeting place between believers, non-believers and believers of other faiths who all respect each other's identities. We are reflecting on all this and navigating towards this meeting place, with the sense of direction that comes from the 'compass' of ethics.

At different times in its history, Arantzazu has been a reference point for hope, peace or cultural revitalisation. The question that the sanctuary is now asking itself, at the beginning of the 21st century, is: what contribution can Arantzazu make today to the world around it? The answer to this question is seated in the synthesis of two notions: ethics and Assisi.

On the foundation stones of the sanctuary all the values of Arantzazu can be summed up in one concept: ethics. It is the response of human conscience to the demands put upon it by the respect for human dignity, the primacy of the individual, the commitment to human dignity above and beyond all else as the main undertaking of the human being. The deep understanding of its noble sense and its sublimation gives ethics a pre-religious and pre-ideological spirituality which, from that starting point, respects and enables the rights, beliefs, confessions and directions of all people and all cultures.

Arantzazu has a desire to bond with Assisi, by physical and symbolic union with that town and what it represents. Besides being the birthplace of Saint Francis, and the focal point of the Franciscans, the town has been projected as the global capital of interdenominational dialogue since 1986. In this sense, it represents significant interdenominational progress. Assisi opens up the dialogue; the next step is for this conversation to find solid points of convergence.

From Arantzazu and Baketik we set out to illuminate the interdenominational conversation that began in Assisi with the following insight: the promotion of ethics as a secular and interdenominational spirituality, a meeting place for people to exist and coexist in different societies as different people. We are in this process of researching this working hypothesis. In developing it, we have found ourselves making some progress, which we would like to share with you.

This is how the initial idea of publishing a book of interdenominational and intercultural prayers for peace comes together through this second insight, which leads us to investigate at the deepest and most sublime levels of ethics in order to seek references for living together in diversity. Together these insights make up the idea for this project. This book is now the unison of both insights, which complement and strengthen each other. It is therefore structured in two parts: a first part, which consists of a proposition for moving towards an interdenominational and inter-

cultural meeting point, and a second part which includes a collection of poems and prayers for peace from different religions and cultures.

The sum of these parts enables us to approach a common theme from two complementary perspectives: the first, more reflective and intellectual; the second, more sensitive and emotional. The combined result is a synergy that offers us the opportunity to get closer to “the others” with both head and heart, through empathy. Empathy to comprehend how the strongest aspirations of human beings in different cultures have been poetically transcribed throughout history, and to understand how we can share them ethically now and in the future. The result is this body of work entitled “Intercultural and Interdenominational Meeting Points”.

It is addressed to three main groups. First, any person, anywhere, in any culture, who is concerned about its themes. It aims to provoke thought and, where appropriate, action, for living and living together better.

Secondly, it is a book addressed to the world of education, as much for teachers as for pupils and families. The first part of the book suggests four basic exercises which may be useful for the teaching profession and for families in approaching conflicts of coexistence and personal education from various perspectives and with broad horizons.

Thirdly, this book is addressed to officials, politicians, academics and social workers, whose area of competence and responsibility relates to the challenge of moving closer to an alliance of communities at the local and global level. It aims to encourage the specific hope that we can find a basic meeting point between communities, cultures and religions, both in the world and in our own neighbourhoods.

Baketik

MEETING POINTS

Part One:

THE PROPOSITION FROM ASSISI TO ARANTZAZU

INTRODUCTION TO PART ONE

This proposition for a meeting point for believers, non-believers, believers of different faiths and people and groups with different ideological, cultural or national identities is titled "From Assisi to Arantzazu". The proposition is presented in summary form here. Another book describes it more specifically, in a broader and more detailed manner. This is the result of a personal reflection by the author and Baketik's experience in Arantzazu. It is presented with a certain degree of boldness but also with humility and serenity.

The aim of wanting to move closer to a meeting point between differences is certainly daring. This is compensated, however, by the awareness of its limitations. We know that we shall not succeed completely, because that is impossible; the human condition is imperfect, incomplete and always on the road to somewhere. The aim is daring, the intention humble, and the approach serene. We do not aspire to discover anything new, only to share an imperfect and limited idea that, at least, needs to be improved and amended and, at best, can perhaps provoke other ideas that bring us closer to the ideal of a better understanding of the human race.

The author's essential journey in this proposition has wandered along the border between believers and non-believers, sometimes on one side, sometimes on the other. One of his personal commitments has been to find language and codes that can be understood and shared by both sides. This proposition has a lot to do with that aim. The proposition he puts forward does not pretend to be academically or philosophically exact, it is a suggestion that is based on experience, observation and the study of one's own critical awareness. Its style, therefore, is one of suggestion, not statement.

1. First Section: Three Hypotheses

Interdenominational and intercultural dialogue have made significant steps since the encounters in Assisi, ranging from the Parliament of the World's Religions to the formulation of the concept of the 'Alliance of Civilizations'. Nevertheless, the challenge of finding a universal code of ethics that can facilitate a basic level of understanding between the civilizations, religions, cultures and ideologies of the world has still not yielded the desired results. We have been unable to define a basic meeting point. Faced with this reality, and with the objective of promoting a greater rapprochement to this meeting point, I am creating a proposition entitled "From Assisi to Arantzazu" on the basis of three initial hypotheses.

•First Hypothesis: A New Starting Point

The first hypothesis is that, in order to find this common and shared domain, the starting point or the most suitable strategy is not, perhaps, to begin by looking for a set of ethical guidelines. It may be that we are still not ready for this and that we need a process with a more open and less formal starting point, or it may be that we shall never succeed, perhaps because it is impossible to reach a set of ethical guidelines due to the diversity of humankind and its limited condition.

•Second Hypothesis: Sharing Experiences

This does not mean, however, that we cannot find an effective meeting point for structuring peaceful coexistence in a diverse world that is made up of different societies and people. The second hypothesis is that, instead of trying to share a standard set of rules, perhaps for the time being and as a first step we should try to share a set of basic experiences for life and living together better. We should agree to drive and develop a series of teachings that each religion and each culture fosters and develops according to its own way of viewing the world.

•Third Hypothesis: Four Basic Experiences

The third hypothesis is that these shared teachings can be summed up into four basic experiences: understanding the limitation of the human condition; feeling a sense of gratitude; listening and having a conscience; and knowing the meaning of human dignity. It has to do with experiences with solid foundations and the potential for development, open to trusting in the best of the human being in any part of the world.

2. Basis of the Proposition

The three hypotheses mentioned above anticipate a proposition that will be explained in more detail later. However, first we need to carry out an initial process of reflection which will lead us to that stage. This passage comprises three questions, three responses and a conclusion. This is how it is all structured.

2.1. Three Questions

I tend to think that the existential disorientation of our times, and the difficulties of existing and coexisting in different societies and with different people, has much to do with compartmentalising three basic questions:

•First Question: Is a person in the world to be closed in on him/herself and what he/she controls, or to be open to what is beyond and transcends him/her?

We must either live life 'closed' or 'open'. To be closed in on ourselves or open to others, to other things. This is a basic question that has a great deal to do with the core of our existence and what can help us to understand what brings us together in our differences. It is a determining factor for focusing our life in one direction or the other right from the start.

•Second Question: Is spirituality a potential that is available to all human beings or just to those who practise a religion?

Can a non-religious person understand and realise all of his/her potential as a human being without opening up to a spiritual dimension? Moreover, are all religious people genuinely open to spirituality? If the spiritual dimension, as well as being fundamental, can help us to understand ourselves in a more specific and essentially human way we find ourselves faced with a serious problem, because this reality has been displaced and is surrounded by prejudices.

•Third Question: What is ethics, and what does it mean in practice? Is it the primary driving force in life or not?

Baketik defines ethics as the effort of the conscience to respond to the demands placed upon it by the respect for human dignity. We could say that it is the noblest (spiritual) expression of consideration for one's neighbour (i.e. of opening up to others). It is the key to coexistence. The problem that this question poses is a dual one. On the one hand, it is whether ethics is present or absent in the reality of our daily life. On the other hand, in the case that ethics is present, it is whether it plays a leading or subsidiary role. That is to say, whether ethics governs our decisions or if it is there for decoration only.

2.2. Three Responses

It may seem that these questions do not, in principle, have a direct relation to the search for an interdenominational, intercultural and inter-ideological meeting point. It may appear this way because the connection takes place at a deep level, not at a superficial one. Through the responses to these three questions we shall try to move closer to how they are linked to the proposition that we are creating and its objective.

•First Response: inward- or outward-looking

My belief is that the human being is not in the world to be turned in on him/herself and what he/she controls, but to open up to what lies beyond and transcends him/her. Humankind is here to seek out happiness and the meaning of existence. Not to turn inwards but to look outside the self for relations and contacts with the other, others or other things. In this play on words, "the other" means those people with whom we coexist in close proximity, "the others" are those who are different from us in some way and "other things" are the mysteries that surround us for which we do not have a definitive explanation: life, love, the self, death, the universe, etc.

We are irredeemably limited, incomplete and imperfect beings for whom the meaning of existence is very difficult to work out. Turned in on what we control and know, we repeatedly come up against our own limitations and existential disorientation. The observation

of our paths through life, and of those who are around us or who have preceded us, is further proof to support this thesis. We go through life looking for the plenitude that we do not (nor ever will) achieve via the most sensible, absurd or harebrained paths.

We come up against our own limitations, trying to ignore or avoid them. Behind the quest for money, security, power, leadership or whatever, including the struggle for a fairer world, we often find that it is a hopeless quest for an unattainable potential, the yearning for a superhuman paradise. However, that is outside the scope of what we can control by ourselves.

We are connected to what is beyond us, and it is in this relationship that our existence can begin to find a direction and meaning. In this context, and above all differences, we can begin to recognise ourselves as fellow human beings, with the same limited condition and with the same capacity for opening ourselves up to what is beyond and transcends us. All human beings, independent of race, colour, sex, creed or condition, are united by this dual connection of limitation and transcendence.

•Second Response: with the capacity for spirituality or without it

Our openness to what is beyond us brings us into contact with our capacity for spirituality, which is common to all human beings. Spirituality, according to my own experience, is the ability to receive (receptiveness), to become aware of things, entering into contact with and relating to (developing a process) the realities that drive our lives in its deepest and most non-material way. These realities can be related to faith and all that it entails. In this case we should be talking about a religious spirituality, and these realities may be related, for example, to a religious as well as a non-religious perspective, love for life, solidarity towards others, unconditional love, confidence in the face of death, generosity, hope, the capacity for forgiveness or reconciliation, an ethical approach, empathy with nature, sensitivity to art, creativity, etc.

From this point of view, spirituality means receptiveness and the process of connecting with these realities. It means, for example, that it is not enough to know that love makes the world and life go round. As well as knowing it, both receptiveness and a process for connecting with this reality are required. The connection may be made through a deeper investigation of this reality, through praise and sublimation, (intended here to mean understanding it deeply in its most elevated significance), through interiorisation, action, appreciation, or simply through listening, observation and contemplation..

The removal of the spiritual dimension from the human being creates a vacuum that must be filled with something. The 'hole' is normally covered over with the creation of substitute "absolutes". We could sum them up under two headings: absolutes of individualism (security, money, leadership, possession, control, family, status, self-image, etc.), all centred on 'me' and 'mine', and ideological absolutes (of political, religious, social, everyday or other types of causes), all centred on a reason that makes people feel secure.

I believe that the deployment of the human potential of every individual requires the development of one's spiritual capacity, without the substitution of false absolutes, and with an independence that may or may not come from practising a particular religious faith. This elevation above the earthly and material makes it possible to understand the 'other', beyond and deeper than what he/she is, does or appears. The spiritual dimension of the human being enables one to look at and see someone different not just as a way or a means, but as an end in him/herself, unique, inimitable and entitled to dignity, respect and rights.

•Third Response: ethics either comes first or second

Ethics, in my opinion, comes first, not second; nor is it a case of “it depends”. Money does not come first, nor do possessions, power, security, self-image, leadership, ideology, nor the defence of social or political causes. The first is to yield, to respond to the demands placed on one by the respect for human dignity.

This does not mean that money, security, ideology or political or other leanings are unimportant, simply that they are relative. If the first and most important things are money or a political idea, we shall tend to give them an absolute value. Their importance will be such that our motto will be “ anything goes”. Everything will be justified to obtain what is first on the list. Many of the destructive conflicts that destroy our coexistence start from here.

Ethics not only comes first, it is the main goal of the human being, who has two capabilities that define him/her in a particular way: the ability to love and the ability to tell good from evil. Ethics is none other than the process by which these capabilities develop, it is the determination to drive human conduct from the good side. The basis of ethics and human dignity is love for one’s neighbour, otherwise what is the use of the ability to differentiate good from bad if it is not to jeopardise the other person, if it is not to be fair to him/her?

Love, according to the way the French philosopher, Nédoncelle, defined it in the last century, is “the desire to promote the good of the other and reciprocal communion”. It is this respect for the dignity of the other, the desire that he/she should be promoted as such, which justifies ethics. In short, we could say that the first ability of the human being is the capacity to love and to be able to develop this capacity; we need a second, the capacity to differentiate between good and evil, in other words the ethical capacity.

My perception is that we distinguish good from evil –we have a sense of ethics— to be able to love, which is what mainly sets us aside as human beings. Our ability to love and to distinguish good from evil describes, as nothing else can, the vocation of connection, openness and meeting with the other upon which the human being is based, above any differences of origin or identity. The paradox of ethics is that it predisposes us to live experiences of unconditional support and to understand the transcendent reality of the human being.

2.3. A Conclusion

The journey we have made in the previous section, through these three questions and their corresponding responses, enables us to draw the following conclusion, which will underpin our proposition.

Ethics and spirituality are two universal capacities that can be found in each and every human being, and their joint development is an essential principle that can bring significant progress to the life and coexistence of people and communities:

•To live better

Ethics and spirituality combined can help us to find a personal and vital direction within the existential disorientation of our times. It is not, of course, a magic formula or a journey that is scripted or described. They are points of reference because each person, logically, has to find his/her own path.

·To live together better

The association of ethics and spirituality can help us to live better together in a complex and diverse world. People of different origins, identities or cultures can share some basic assumptions to understand and respect each other without having a negative effect on each person's faith, convictions, beliefs, tradition or particular identity; in fact, quite the opposite.

·To teach better

Ethics and spirituality make up an educational starting point that enables us to rethink education from the base up, and on a universal level. It can help to lay the foundations, to structure, arrange and simplify the diversity and multiplicity of principles, values, abilities and results in the development of a person that one attempts to promote from school onwards.

For this proposition to serve in order to live, coexist and educate people better, the ethic of human dignity must be spiritually sublimated and understood in its strongest sense as the main purpose of the human being. That is, one should be able to experience it from one's capacity for spirituality. Throughout history, war has justified itself through the ethical and aesthetical sublimation of its noble nature. Peace needs an ethical and spiritual sublimation that has similar strength to the idea, held for centuries, of the "noble war".

3. Structure of the Proposition

Based on all that has been set out so far, the Proposition "From Assisi to Arantzazu" is structured under five headings, as follows:

1. The Basis

Ethics can be the shared spirituality of our era, a pre-religious and pre-ideological spirituality, a secular ethic made possible by a social humanist and universal consensus and understanding among people, and coexistence, as much at the local level as on the international stage.

2. The Channel

This proposition cannot be communicated or shared through a normal set of rules, but rather through a collection of educational assumptions by the individual. These require a process of experience in each civilization, religion or culture, and the freedom to develop and trust in the best of the human being.

3. The Content

These educational assumptions around the individual focus on four basic learning experiences: the experience of the limitation of the human condition; the experience of feeling a sense of gratitude; the experience of listening to one's conscience, and the experience of knowing the meaning of human dignity.

4. The Agreement

This proposition recommends preparing and driving an interdenominational and intercultural agreement to freely develop these experiences, based on an awareness that they cannot be considered as a finishing line or completed project but, at best, one more rung on the ladder.

5. The Goal

The search for meeting points usually comes up against the risk of opting for ethical consensus, thus disdaining identity. Nevertheless, there can be no genuine meeting if characteristics of identity are not respected. Ethics is not only a consensus, it is also a perception of individual and unconditional realities. The desire and the objective of this proposition are to put forward that it can unite all of them, safeguarding and respecting different identities.

4. Application and Development of the Proposition: Four Basic Experiences

The four basic learning experiences that this proposition applies and develops have two major possibilities: to awaken in the individual, as a vital piece of knowledge, that which is more specific and universally human to people and, on this basis, weave a fabric of understanding, respect and mutual acceptance between different identities.

Perhaps the most important thing, however, is that there are no unique modes of behaviour or sets of standards which one has to copy or to which we all have to restrict ourselves in the same way. They indicate the rock, the solid foundations on which human creation stands —personal, social and educational—, with the freedom and trust in every person, in every culture and every religion, at the time of undertaking and unfolding one's own journey.

4.1. The Learning Experience of the Limitation of the Human Condition

We are all transitory, limited and imperfect; we neither know everything nor can we do everything. The awareness of our limitations is the basic assumption of ethics. Without an awareness of our imperfection, it is impossible to understand the "other". It is my own reality that becomes the platform for reaching the deeper significance of solidarity or human dignity. Without humility regarding one's own limitations, empathy, love or generosity are expressions of arrogance or superiority. Humility in the context of our limitations is an indispensable requirement for empathy with the "other", which ethics requires. This is its connection.

An awareness of our limitations is also a prerequisite for developing our capacity for spirituality. Knowledge of our limits is what opens us up to what is beyond us. Knowing that we are incomplete beings enables us to trust in things that stimulate life in its deepest and most non-material sense. Again, humility about our limitations becomes indispensable. Whoever feels him/herself self-sufficient and perfect, whoever believes themselves in control of everything (or of being able to control it) not only does not need to open up to what transcends him/her but neither knows how to nor is able to do it. The learning experience of the limitation of the human condition is, in short, essential for understanding the profound meaning of ethics, spirituality and the synergy between both.

4.2. The Learning Experience of the Sense of Gratitude

In referring to ethics, we have underlined that it involves two things: the ability to develop our capacity to love and to distinguish between good and evil. Concerning the first, gratitude is a basic manifestation of our capacity to love, because it opens our heart to "the other" and to "other things". Regarding the second, to show gratitude is to recognise what deserves to be appreciated as being good. It therefore implies highlighting

what is good. Ethics is the effort made by our conscience to respond to the demands placed upon it by the respect for human dignity. We cannot get close to an understanding of human dignity without the will to find the best of the human condition and its creations in what surrounds us and in those who surround us. For all these reasons, the sense of gratitude is linked directly to ethics, it is a condition. In order to act ethically we need to develop our capacity to show gratitude.

This involves learning and awakening those realities that accompany us and deserve our conscious expression of deep gratitude, because they are an extraordinary gift for life; it involves reacting by giving thanks for them. Gratitude involves stepping inside ourselves, a process of interior elaboration, in which feelings and reasons take part; it also means stepping outside ourselves, involving a sublimation of that which deserves to be valued. The conscious expression of profound gratitude forms part of a purely spiritual process, a mediation that enables us to open up to spirituality.

4.3. The Learning Experience of Listening to One's Own Conscience

Nobody can work out for us what is ethical for each one of us. That is a task that forms part of our freedom. It is a freedom that should not be confused with impunity or infallibility, it is a responsibility. We draw on objective and subjective references that can help us to make an initial distinction between what is ethical and what is not. However, this process evolves as responsible freedom through an inner dialogue with our conscience. The problem can be that this interior dialogue is poor or that we are only capable of reaching superficial levels of awareness. Whatever the case, nothing can replace the role of listening to the deepest part of our conscience when discerning what is ethical. It is a capacity human beings have in order to distinguish between good and evil and to act ethically.

Listening to one's conscience, on the other hand, is a clearly spiritual activity. It puts us in touch with those things that stimulate life in its deepest and most non-material sense. It opens us up to the understanding of things that are beyond our comprehension and transcends the limited world of the rational objective. Listening to our conscience, in short, is the development of our capacity for spirituality.

4.4. The Learning Experience of the Meaning of Human Dignity

Human dignity is the essence, common to all people, which enables us to see ourselves and look at ourselves not just as a means but also as ends in ourselves. As ends in ourselves, we are worthy of respect and are entitled to the same rights. The learning experience of human dignity means opening up to the other, to see part of me in him or her. It means realising that the person who stands before me suffers as I do, enjoys him/herself as I do, has the same fears as me, laughs as I do, dreams as I do, loves as I do, etc. To learn the meaning of human dignity is to understand that a part of me is in the other person and a part of the other is in me. The part that we share is human dignity. Human dignity is the foundation of ethics.

We are limited but we are not only 'limitation'; we also have unlimited creative capacity. We are a channel and a capacity for spirituality. We can open ourselves up to what is beyond and transcends us. We can consciously recognise, appreciate and enjoy things that deserve the conscious expression of our profound gratitude. Our limitations and our potential make us worthy of respect and equality. Human dignity enables us to see the best in a person. It brings us close to transcendent reality, makes us understand the profound meaning of our identity and teaches us to respect that of others. It also enables us

to understand hope in the person. Human dignity represents trust in the human being in spite of everything. All this requires the deployment of our capacity for spirituality.

Throughout this experience there is something that is repeated. One characteristic of these experiences is worth highlighting: they are inexhaustible. They are not learnt once and for always. They retain levels of meaning and density that are hidden until such time as they are revealed and understood in a new form. The learning experience that is suggested in relation to these four teachings consists of turning to them time and time again as sources that help us to live and to live together which, in each new situation and before every new important journey, have a perspective and a new horizon to offer.

This proposition and its four learning experiences are only a contribution. What can we do with them? We sow the seeds; if they have something to say or to offer to the world around us, these seeds will bear fruit when they are ready. If they are the wrong type or are just abnormal, they will not germinate and will have meant a failed attempt rather than something that will teach us.

In any case, this proposition cannot just be understood intellectually: it requires practical knowledge and experience in order to understand it in its deepest sense; it needs to be lived. One needs to experience the meaning and profound implications of each one of these learning experiences in depth. This is what we can do with this proposition: live it and let it work within ourselves. One of the key points that I have learnt during my life is that not everything consists of getting it right but, more importantly, of trusting.

Our commitment as we go through the world and life should be to create conditions that improve the world and life. On this basis, we try to create conditions that bring us closer to an interdenominational and intercultural meeting point that enables us to have a better understanding of existence and coexistence in different societies and with different people. We present this proposition and this book with this hope in mind. Vaclav Havel once said that "hope is not the conviction that everything will turn out well, but rather the security of knowing that what we do makes sense, without concerning ourselves with the end result".

Jonan Fernandez Erdozia
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MEETING POINTS

Part Two:

80 RELIGIOUS PRAYERS AND UNIVERSAL TEXTS FOR PEACE

INTRODUCTION TO PART TWO

The second part of this book has two sections. The first brings together religious prayers from around the world and the second incorporates a collection of texts for peace of a universal nature by authors from all continents. There are 80 entries in total. These are clearly not all that there should be; many, unfortunately very many, are missing; there would not be room in one book, nor even in ten. The aspiration for peace has endless references throughout the history of humanity, from all its cultures and countries.

It is not, therefore, intended to be an exhaustive collection, but rather evidence of a reality. We shall be able to examine how, from different continents and from different faiths, the sublime idea of peace and all that goes with it unites us at the deepest level of our being, beyond any differences.

The selection of religions and prayers, including the order in which they are exhibited, takes the interdenominational meeting that took place in Assisi in 1986 as a starting point. The first prayer from each religion is the one that was recited at that meeting.

The choice of universal texts for peace was made according to the selection criteria of the Baketik working group. We have looked for texts from all continents and cultures, from universal personalities, and texts with strong creative and ethical significance.

We have allowed ourselves to start and finish this collection of prayers and texts with poems of Bitoriano Gandiaga (1928-2001), a Franciscan monk from Arantzazu and one of the most brilliant and profound poets in Basque literature. His character and his poetry personify the convergence that is Arantzazu: spirituality, culture, nature and peace.

I went in search of peace

Often I was far away
in my search for peace,
I went in search of peace,
with eternal hope
that peace I did not have in me
I had to find it far away.

I was far away
in my search for peace, but
yet without firm hope;
the peace I did not have in me
also still was far away
in its distant remoteness.

I stayed in that very place
(never further would I go)
looking at my inner self,
and I began to work,
to put in place
every mixed-up passion.

As I sorted out my self
it started to enlighten
the self and its surroundings.
From then never further shall I go,
peace is not so distant,
its source is right inside oneself.

Bitoriano Gandiaga

1. Religious Prayers for Peace

Buddhism
Hinduism
Islam
Jainism
Sintoism
Sikhism
Traditional African Religions
American Indian Religions
Zoroastrianism
Judaism
Bah'ai
Christianity

Buddhism

Buddhism is a means for personal and social transformation emanating in the northeast of India from Siddhartha Gautama (Buddha) around the fifth century B.C.

Its goal is the direct, personal understanding of reality that surpasses all normal types of thought, and to develop qualities of goodness and wisdom, which lead to a state of enlightenment.

Buddhists number between 230 and 500 million worldwide. It is a number that is difficult to verify, mainly due to the socio-political and cultural situation in China.

1

May all beings everywhere plagued
with sufferings of body and mind
quickly be freed from their illnesses.

May those frightened cease to be afraid,
and may those bound be free.
May the powerless find power,
and may people think of befriending
one another.

May those who find themselves in trackless,
fearful wilderness —the children, the aged, the unprotected—
be guarded by beneficent celestials,
and may they swiftly attain Buddhahood.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

2

Now under the loving kindness and care of the Buddha,
each believer of religion in the world
transcends the differences of religion, race and nationality,
discards small differences
and unites in oneness to discuss sincerely
how to annihilate strife from the earth,
how to reconstruct a world without arms,
and how to build welfare and peace of mankind,
so that never-ending light and happiness can be obtained for the world of the future.
May the Lord Buddha give His loving kindness and blessing to us for the realization of our prayers.

Religion for Peace, 1973, WCRP

3

He brings together those who are divided,
he encourages those who are friendly;
he is a peacemaker,
a lover of peace,
impassioned for peace,
a speaker of words that make peace.

“Digha Nikaya” XIII. Tevigga Sutta

“Tevigga Sutta” is the 13th of 39 discourses that make up the Digha Nikaya, the first of five collections that complete the Sutta Pitaka, which, in turn, is one of the three canons that complete the Pali Tipitaka of the Theravada, the first recorded body of Buddhist writings, compiled around 100 B.C.

Hinduism

Hinduism is a traditional religion in India, known as the "eternal religion". It does not have a founder and is neither a religion nor a philosophy, rather an amalgamation of both, a set of metaphysical and religious beliefs, worship, customs and rituals that conform to a tradition, without a single dogma and a central organisation. However, its doctrine is collected in four holy books, the *Vedas*, which, together with the *Upanishad*, make up the set of texts that are considered significant. The total number of Hindus is over 800 million. In India, Hindus make up 81.3% of the total population.

4

Oh God, lead us from the unreal to the Real
Of God, lead us from darkness to light
Oh God, lead us from death to immortality
Shanti, Shanti, Shanti unto all.
O Lord God almighty may there be peace in Celestial regions.
May there be peace on earth
May the waters be appeasing
May herbs be wholesome, and may trees and plants bring peace to all.
May all beneficent beings bring peace to us
May thy Vedic Law propagate peace all through the world.
May all things be a source of peace to us
And may thy peace itself bestow peace on all
And may that peace come to me also.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

5

May the winds, the oceans, the grasses,
the nights and days,
the mother earth, the father heaven,
all vegetation, the sun,
be all sweet to us.

Let us follow the path of goodness for all times,
like the sun and the moon moving eternally in the sky.

Let us be charitable to one another.

Let us not kill or be violent with one another.

Let us know and appreciate the points of view of others.

And let us unite.

May God who is friendly,
benevolent, all-encompassing, measurer of everything, the sovereign, the lord of speech,
may He shower His blessings on us.

Oh Lord, remove my indiscretion and arrogance;
control my mind.

Put an end to the snare of endless desires.

Broaden the sphere of compassion
and help me to cross the ocean of existence.

Religion for Peace, 1973, WCRP

6

Peace be to earth and to airy spaces!

Peace be to heaven, peace to the waters,
peace to the plants and peace to the trees!

May all the gods grant me peace!

By this invocation of peace may peace be diffused!

By this invocation of peace may peace bring peace!

With this peace the dreadful I appease,

with this peace the cruel I appease,

with this peace all evil I appease,

so that peace may prevail, happiness prevail!

May everything for us be peaceful!

Atharva Veda 19.9.14

This is the fourth of the Hindu Vedas. It is a book of rituals and comprises 731 hymns called *saunaka* and *paippalada*

Islam

This is a monotheistic religion based on the teachings of the holy book of the Koran. As a second source of doctrine and of the laws of Islam, we have the *Hadith*, or Prophetic Traditions, and the *Sunna* or historical record of the actions and teachings of the Prophet Mohammed.

Islam is based on five pillars: the testimony that there is no other god but Allah and that Mohammed is the Messenger of Allah (Shahadah); prayer (salaah); charity (zakaah), pilgrimage to Mecca (Haj), and fasting (Saum) in Ramadan.

It is estimated that there are currently 1,800 million Moslems.

7

In the name of Allah, the beneficent, the merciful.
Praise be to the Lord of the Universe,
who had created us and made us into tribes and nations;
that we may know each other, not that we may despise each other.
If the enemy inclines toward peace,
do thou also incline towards peace and trust God,
for the Lord is the one that heareth and knoweth all things...
and the servants of God,
most gracious are those who walk on the Earth in humility
and when we address them, we say, "PEACE".

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

8

Verily, those who believe and do what is right, their Lord guides them by their faith; beneath them shall rivers flow in the gardens of pleasure.
Their cry therein shall be: Celebrated be Thy praises, O God!
And their salutation therein shall be: Peace!
And the end of their cry shall be: Praise be to God, the Lord of the worlds!

Koran 10, 10-11

The *Koran* is a collection of sermons delivered by Mohammed that was recorded by his followers, assembled, written and published after his death. For Moslems, God revealed the holy book of the *Koran* to Mohammed.

9

According to Anas, after the Messenger of God said, "Help your brother whether he is oppressor or oppressed," Anas replied to him, "O Messenger of God, a man who is oppressed I am ready to help, but how does one help an oppressor?" "By hindering him doing wrong," he said.

Hadith de Bukhari

Muhammad Ismâ'îl al-Bukhârî is one of the most respected editors of the *Hadith*, a collection of stories about Mohammed and other founders of Islam.

Jainism

This is an Indian religion founded in the 6th century B.C. by Mahavira. It maintains that non-violence is the supreme religion and has insisted on its observance in thought, word and deed at the individual and social levels. The holy text *Tattvartha Sutra* sums it up with the phrase "all life is equally upheld".

Its code of conduct focuses on the observance of five vows: Ahimsa (non-violence), Satya (truthfulness), Asteya (not stealing), Brahmacharya (chastity) and Aparigraha (indifference to material things).

It is estimated that there are currently some 4 million Jain believers.

10

Peace and Universal Love is the essence of the Gospel
preached by all the Enlightened Ones.
The Lord has preached that equanimity is the Dharma.
Forgive do I, creatures all,
and let all creatures forgive me.
Unto all have I amity, and unto none enmity.
Know that violence is the root cause of all miseries in the world.
Violence in fact, is the knot of bondage.
'Do not injure any living being.'
This is the eternal, perennial, and unalterable
way of spiritual life.

A weapon, howsoever powerful it may be,
can always be superseded by a superior one;
but no weapon can, however,
be superior to non-violence and love.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

11

Lead me from Death to Life,
from Falsehood to Truth.
Lead me from Despair to Hope,
From Fear to Trust.
Lead me from Hate to Love,
from War to Peace.
Let Peace fill our Heart,
our World,
Our Universe.

Satish Kumar

Former Jain monk living in England and an advocate of nuclear disarmament.

12

Man should subvert
anger by forgiveness,
subdue pride by modesty,
overcome hypocrisy with simplicity,
and greed by contentment.

Samanasuttam 136

A set of 756 gathas or hymns compiled by Acarya Shri Vidyanandaji, accepted by the different branches of Jainism.

Shintoism

The term Shinto refers to the practices developed by the Japanese to venerate all gods of heaven and earth (kami); its origins go back to the creation of Japan. Some kamis are very local and recognised as spirits or genies of a particular place, whereas others represent major natural objects and processes.

It is considered a religion, popular worship that be described as a form of naturalistic animism that venerates ancestors and is deeply identified with Japanese culture.

It is practised by 100 million people (mainly in Japan).

13

Although the people living across the ocean surrounding us, I believe,
are all our brothers and sisters,
why are there constant troubles in this world?
Why do winds and waves rise in the ocean surrounding us?
I only earnestly wish that the wind will soon
puff away all the clouds
which are hanging over the tops of the mountains.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

14

O Most High, help to bring thy Light into the darkened conditions of the world!
Be gracious to us thy humble servants
and bless us with illumination as to that which is Divinely relevant to the fulfilment of thy will!

O Most High,
inspire thy servants throughout the world to further efforts
towards leading back thy children who are led astray to the right way,
and to live and act on the faith
of what has been taught by the great founders of the religions!

Bless all spiritual leaders with thy power
and enable them to give help, joy, comfort and reassurance to those suffering!

Religions for Peace, 1973, WCRP

15

Regard heaven as your father,
earth as your mother,
and all things as your brothers and sisters.

Oracle of Kami de Atsuta

The Atsuta Sanctuary is the second most venerated sanctuary in Japan; the Kusanagi sword (one of the national Japanese symbols) is kept here.

Sikhism

The Sikh religion was founded in India by the guru Nanak (1469-1539 A.D.). The basic doctrine of Sikhism is the belief in a single god and in the teachings of the ten gurus of Sikhism, aggregated in the Sikh holy book, *Guru Granth Sahib*. Sikhism sets out three principles for everyday behaviour: to constantly invoke God or meditate; to earn one's living by honourable means; to share the fruits of one's work as an expression of love and compassion with humanity.

23 million people embrace this religion, the majority of them in the Punjab region of India.

16

God adjudges us according to our deeds,
not the clothes that we wear;
That truth is above everything,
but higher still is truthful living.
Know that we attain God when we love, and that victory only endures
in consequences of which no one is defeated.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

17

May the kingdom of justice prevail!
May the believers be united in love!
May the hearts of the believers be humble,
high their wisdom,
and may they be guided in their wisdom by the Lord.

Religion for Peace, 1973, WCRP

18

Nanak says, True lovers are those who are forever absorbed in the Beloved. Whoever discriminates between treatment held good or bad, is not a true lover —rather he is caught in calculations.

Asa-ki-Var

Asa Ki Var is a collection of 24 verses written by the guru Nanak Devji, the founder of Sikhism.

Traditional **African** Religions

It is misleading to group all African religions together in one single section, given their cultural and religious diversity. The impact of two religions imported into the African continent is fundamental: Christianity and Islam. Traditional worship is as important in West Africa (Guinea Bissau, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Ivory Coast, Burkina Faso, Togo, Benin) as in Eastern and Southern Africa (Tanzania, Malawi, Mozambique, Zimbabwe, Botswana, Madagascar). Various studies estimate that the number of people practising the different traditional African religions is approximately 68 million.

19

Almighty God, the Great
Thumb we cannot evade to tie any knot:
The Roaring Thunder that splits mighty trees;
the all-seeing Lord up on high who sees
even the footprints of an antelope
on a rock mass here on earth.
You are the one who does not hesitate to respond to our call.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

20

Peace be with us.
Say that the country may have tranquillity.
Peace be with us.
And the people may continue to increase.
Peace be with us.
Say that the people and the flock and the herds
may prosper and be free from illness.
Peace be with us.
May peace reign over earth,
may the gourd cup agree with vessel.
Peace be with us.
May their heads agree and every ill word driven out into the wilderness,
into the virgin forest.
Peace be with us.

Litany for peace by the Kikuyu, Kenia

The ancestors of the Kikuyu people arrived in Kenya during the Bantu migrations between 1200 and 1600. The cultural base of the present Kikuyu people seems to come from the initial colonists of the region, the Thagicu.

21

O God, thou hast let me pass the night in peace,
Let me pass the day in peace.
Wherever I may go
Upon my way which thou madest peaceable for me,
O God, lead my steps.
When I have spoken,
Keep off calumny from me.
When I am hungry,
Keep me from murmuring.
When I am satisfied,
Keep me from pride.
Calling upon thee, I pass the day,
O Lord who hast no Lord.

Boran, Kenia

The Boran people of Kenya are one of the groups that come from the migrant workers of the Oromo people, who left the mountainous regions of southern Ethiopia in the 16th century.

22

Olisa, the long-sighted one,
You hold both the yam and the knife,
Whomsoever you give a piece will eat.
Grant us health;
Grant us long life;
Give us food and drink.
Bless our children:
May the father train his child;
And may the child in turn take care of his father.
May it work out for everyone according to his thoughts:
Whoever thinks good, may it be good for him;
But may evil follow the one who thinks evil.

Igbo, Nigeria

The Igbo are one of the most widespread ethnic groups in Africa. The majority of the Igbo are to be found in the southeast of Nigeria, where they make up 17% of the population; they can also be found in significant numbers in Cameroon and Equatorial Guinea.

23

May God grant us peace and health of the body,
Let the black and red people live on earth in peace
And live in the world to come in joyful heart
May our life be long and deep
And a white hen guide our way towards heaven (the sky).

Serer, Senegal

Under pressure from the Fulanis, who tried to force the conversion to Islam of all people in the region around the 14th century, the Serer left their lands in the valley of the Senegal River to settle in the northeast of Gambia and the valleys of the Sine and Saloum rivers in Senegal.

24

Our Father, it is thy universe, it is thy will:
Let us be at peace, let the souls of the people be cool.
Thou art our Father, remove all evil from our path.

Nuer, Sudán

The Nuers settled in the Gambela region (Ethiopia) and in the south of Sudan (east of the Upper Nile province) in the Nasir region less than 200 years ago, having come from the west, from the banks of the Baro River.

American Indian Religions

The term American Indian applies to the countless number of pre-Columbian peoples and cultures that were present on the American continent before the arrival of the Europeans. Cultural colonisation and epidemics caused many of these peoples and cultures to disappear, while others established themselves in new groups and alliances in response to the so-called conquest of America by parts of Europe.

According to Mètreux, the French ethnologist, all the indigenous tribes, from the Tierra del Fuego to the extreme north of Canada, believe in the existence of a great spirit as the principle and creation of all things, on which life and death depend. This type of animism is based on the use of natural metaphors for divinity, and a feeling of interconnection between humans, plants and animals. Another common characteristic is the absence of a sense of "history", since storytelling prevails as the repository of collective memory, where stories are the best means for passing on culture.

25

O Great spirit of our Ancestors,
I raise my pipe to you;
To your messengers in the four winds, and
to Mother Earth who provides for your children.
Give us the wisdom
to teach our children to love,
to respect, and to be kind to each other,
so that they may grow with peace in mind.

Let us learn to share
all good things
that you provide for us on this Earth.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

26

O Great Spirit of the South,
whose warm breath of compassion melts the ice that gathers round our hearts,
whose fragrance speaks of distant springs and summer days,
dissolve our fears, melt our hatreds, kindle our love into flames of true and living realities.
Teach us that he who is truly strong is also kind,
he who is wise tempers justice with mercy,
he who is truly brave matches courage with compassion.
O Great Spirit of the West,
the land of the setting Sun,
with Your soaring mountains and free,
wide rolling prairies,
bless us with knowledge
of the peace which follows purity of striving and
the freedom which follows like a flowing robe in the winds of a well-disciplined life.
Teach us that the end is better
than the beginning and
that the setting sun glorifies not in vain.

From the seven holy prayers

27

Do not seek to benefit only yourself, but think of other people also. If you yourself have an abundance, do not say, "The others do not concern me, I need not bother about them!"
If you were lucky in hunting, let others share it.
Moreover, show them the favourable spots where there are many sea lions which can be easily slain.
Let others have their share occasionally.
If you want to amass everything for yourself, other people will stay away from you and no one will want to be with you.
If you should one day fall ill, no one will visit you because, for your part, you did not formerly concern yourself about others.
The Yamana do not like a person who acts selfishly.

Initiation of the Yamana

The Yamanas ("people") are indigenous nomads, a fishing people, who have lived in Tierra del Fuego for about 6,000 years.

Zoroastrianism

Zoroastrianism was created between 1600 and 1200 B.C. in the northeast region of Iran (Persia) by the prophet Zarathustra (Zoroaster), whose teachings were written down in what is known as the Avesta (a series of Gathas or metrical hymns, classified in an organised way around 600 A.D.). It is based on a monotheistic worship of Ahura Mazda (the 'Man of Wisdom') and a dual set of ethics that juxtaposes Truth (Asha) and Falsehood (Druj), which pervades the entire universe. A person's fate depends on his/her choice between one and the other.

According to recent estimates, it has some 2.6 million followers.

28

We pray to God to eradicate all the misery in the world:
that understanding triumph over ignorance,
that generosity triumph over indifference,
that trust triumph over contempt, and
that truth triumph over falsehood.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

29

With bended knees,
with hands outstretched,
do I yearn for the effective expression of the holy spirit working within me:
For this love and understanding, truth and justice;
for wisdom to know the apparent from the real
that I might alleviate the sufferings of men on earth.

God is love, understanding, wisdom and virtue.
Let us love one another,
let us practice mercy and forgiveness,
let us have peace.

Let my joy be of altruistic living,
of doing good to others.
Happiness unto him from
whom happiness proceeds to any other human being.

Religion for Peace, 1973, WCRP

30

Do not do unto others whatever is injurious to yourself.

Shayast-na-Shayast 13.29

Shayast-la-Shayast ("The Pure and the Impure") is one of the texts in Pahlavi (Persian writing) also considered as holy, which hands down the teachings of Zoroaster.

Judaism

The practice of this religion is based on the teachings contained in the Torah (the five holy books of the Law: *Genesis*, *Exodus*, *Leviticus*, *Numbers* and *Deuteronomy*). It is the primary source of the seven moral rules, which oblige every human being, and of the 613 religious rules, which are binding for Jews. The biblical rules are discussed, explained, expanded and applied by the various interpretations that have embodied the oral traditions in writing: "Mishnah" and the collection in which it is included, the *Talmud*. It is estimated that the number of Jews around the world is 17 million.

31

Come let us go up to the mountain of the Lord,
that we may walk the paths of the most high.
And we shall beat our swords into ploughshares,
and our spears into pruning hooks.
Nations shall not lift up sword against nation,
neither shall they learn war any more.
And none shall be afraid,
for the mouth of the Lord of Hosts has spoken.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

32

What is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. This is the whole Torah; all the rest is commentary.

Talmud, "Shabbath" 31a

The *Talmud* is an extensive compilation of rabbinical discussions concerning Jewish laws, ethics, customs and history.

33

Aid an enemy before you aid a friend, to subdue hatred.

Tosefta, "Baba Metzia" 2.26

The "*Tosefta*" is the supplement that adds commentaries and interpretations that, in the interests of brevity, were not included in the *Mishnah* (a summary of the traditional laws and interpretations of the Torah). "*Bava Metzia*" is a treatise that is included in the fourth of six sections (*Sedarim*) into which the *Mishnah* is organised.

Bah' ai

This is a monotheistic religion, the followers of which are faithful to the teachings of Bahá'u'lláh, its prophet and founder: there is one God, who continually reveals his will to humanity. According to the Bah' ai point of view, each one of the main religions introduced by the messengers of God comprises successive stages in the spiritual development of humankind. The central idea of Baha'ism focuses on humanity as a single race and on the day when it will be unified into a global society.

Baha'ism is spread widely across the world and comprises approximately six million believers.

34

Be generous in prosperity
and thankful in adversity,
Be fair in thy judgment,
and guarded in thy speech.
Be a lamp unto those who walk in darkness,
and a home to the stranger.
Be eyes to the blind,
and a guiding light unto the feet of the erring.
Be a breath of life to the body of humankind,
a dew to the soil of the human heart,
and a fruit upon the tree of humility.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

35

When love is realized
and the ideal spiritual bonds unite the hearts of men,
the whole human race will be uplifted,
the world will continually grow more spiritual and radiant,
and the happiness and tranquillity of mankind
be immeasurably increased.

Warfare and strife will be uprooted,
disagreement and dissension pass away,
and Universal Peace unite the nations and peoples of the world.

All mankind will dwell together as one family,
blend as the waves of one sea,
shine as stars of one firmament,
and appear as fruits of the same tree.

This is the happiness and felicity of humankind.
This is the illumination of man,
the glory eternal and life everlasting;
this is the divine bestowal.

Abdu'l-Bahá, "Declaration of Universal Peace"

Before his death, Bahá'u'lláh named his eldest son, Abdu'l-Bahá, as his successor and sole interpreter of his teachings. Bahá'u'lláh appointed him as "The Centre of the Covenant" and ordered all Baha'ists to consider him as head of the faith. Bahá'u'lláh nevertheless continued being the only prophet of Baha'ism.

36

I charge you all that each one of you concentrate all the thoughts of your heart on love and unity. When a thought of war comes, oppose it by a stronger thought of peace. A thought of hatred must be destroyed by a more powerful thought of love. Thoughts of war bring destruction to all harmony, well-being, restfulness and content. Thoughts of love are constructive of brotherhood, peace, friendship, and happiness.

Abdu'l-Bahá, "Conversations in Paris"

Christianity

It is a group of doctrines and communities, which, in spite of great differences in attitudes, practices and doctrines, professes its faith in Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of God incarnate, who died and was resurrected: Christ. It therefore establishes a new type of relationship between God and humankind: God announces his Good News (The Gospel) through his son, Jesus. Thus the life of Jesus stands for the culmination of God's revelation to humankind: God the Father, who gives his Son for the salvation of humankind. There are around 1,100 million Christians (59% Catholics, 29.5% Protestants, 9.5% Orthodox and 2% others).

37

Blessed are the Peacemakers
for they shall be known as the Children of God
Love your enemies,
do good to those who hate you,
bless those who curse you,
pray for those who abuse you.
To those who strike you on the cheek
offer the other also,
and from those who take away your cloak,
do not withhold your coat as well.
Give to everyone who begs from you,
and of those who take away your goods,
do not ask them again.
And as you wish that others would do to you,
do so to them.

Interdenominational Meeting Held in Assisi in 1986

38

You have heard that it was said, "You shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy." But I say to you, Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for he makes his sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? And if you salute only your brethren, what more are you doing than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? You, therefore, must be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.

Matthew, 5.43-48

The "Gospel According to St. Matthew" is one of the four gospels of the New Testament.

39

Lord, make me an instrument of Thy peace;
where there is hatred, let me sow love;
where there is injury, pardon;
where there is doubt, faith;
where there is despair, hope;
where there is darkness, light;
and where there is sadness, joy.
O Divine Master,
grant that I may not so much seek to be consoled as to console;
to be understood, as to understand;
to be loved, as to love;
for it is in giving that we receive,
it is in pardoning that we are pardoned,
and it is in dying that we are born to Eternal Life.

Attributed to St Francis of Assisi

2. Universal Texts for Peace

Peace as a demand and a desire

40

Give Back Peace.
Give back my father, give back my mother;
Give grandpa back, grandma back;
Give me my sons and daughters back.
Give me back myself,
Give back the human race.
As long as this life lasts, this life,
Give back peace,
Peace that never crumbles.

Sankichi Toge

A Japanese poet, who, at the age of 28, was caught just three kilometres from the atomic bomb that was dropped on Hiroshima. After the war, he became a leader of the pacifist movement. He died in 1956.

41

Imagine all the people
living life in peace.
You may say I'm a dreamer,
but I'm not the only one.
I hope someday you'll join us,
and the world will live as one.

John Lennon

(1940-1980) British musician and songwriter. Founder member of the group 'The Beatles'.

42

This is our prayer. Peace in the world.

Inscription on the statue erected in 1958 in the Peace Park in Hiroshima, in memory of Sadako Sasaki (1943-1955), a victim of the atomic bomb dropped on that city

An old Japanese tradition says that someone made a thousand cranes out of paper (origami) and after that was granted a wish by the gods. However, Sadako thought that it would be unjust to ask for treatment for her alone and asked that the effort it was going to take should be used to bring peace and healing to all victims worldwide. She spent 14 months in hospital. With the paper from packets of medicines and others that she found she managed to complete 644 paper cranes of the 1,300 that she planned to create.

This story was so impressive that it went beyond the borders of Japan, becoming a worldwide reference point for pacifist movements.

43

I write
in defence of the kingdom
of Man and his Justice. I ask
for peace
and to speak. I have said
"silence",
"shadow",
"void"
etcetera.
I say
"of Man and his Justice",
"Pacific Ocean",
what they allow me.
I ask
for peace and to speak.

Blas de Otero, "Pido la paz y la palabra"

(1916-1979) Poet from Bilbao, one of the main representatives of social poetry of the 1950s.

Reasons for Peace

44

We must apply our humble efforts to the construction of a more just and humane world. And I want to declare emphatically: Such a world is possible. To create this new society, we must present outstretched and friendly hands, without hatred and rancour, even as we show great determination and never waver in the defence of truth and justice. Because we know that we cannot sow seeds with clenched fists. To sow we must open our hands.

Adolfo Pérez Esquivel

(1931-) Argentinian sculptor, architect and pacifist.

In 1980, he received the Nobel Peace Prize for his commitment to the defence of human rights in Latin America. He is currently one of the most active in the protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas.

45

Peace comes from being able to contribute the best that we have, and all that we are, toward creating a world that supports everyone. But it is also securing the space for others to contribute the best that they have and all that they are.

Hafsat Abiola

(1970-) Young Nigerian activist dedicated to the advancement of women, the young and democracy in her own country and the rest of the world.

46

It is a good moment to repeat that a war is never won. Never mind that history books tell us the opposite. The psychological and material costs of war are so high that any triumph is a pyrrhic victory. Only peace can be won and winning peace means not only avoiding armed conflict but finding ways of eradicating the causes of individual and collective violence: injustice and oppression, ignorance and poverty, intolerance and discrimination. We must construct a new set of values and attitudes to replace the culture of war which, for centuries, has been influencing the course of civilization. Winning peace means the triumph of our pledge to establish, on a democratic basis, a new social framework of tolerance and generosity from which no one will feel excluded.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza

(1934-) Trained as a biochemist. Former Director General of UNESCO (1987-1999). In 2000, the UN Secretary General appointed him as the co-president of the High Level Group for the Alliance of Civilizations. He is also a member of the Committee of Honour of the International Coordination for the Decade of Non-violence and Peace.

47

The cause of liberty and justice finds sympathetic responses in far reaches of the globe. Thinking and feeling people everywhere, regardless of color or creed, understand the deeply-rooted human need for a meaningful existence... Those fortunate enough to live in societies where they are entitled to full political rights can reach out to help the less fortunate in other parts of our troubled planet. Young women and young men setting forth to leave their mark on the world might wish to cast their eyes beyond their own frontiers to the shadowlands of lost rights... Please use your liberty to promote ours.

Aung San Suu Kyi

(1945-) She is a symbolic figure of Burmese opposition against the military dictatorship that has been in power since 1962. Nobel Peace Prize winner in 1991.

48

Peace is the seed ground for healthy co-existence in the society.

Hausa Proverb, Nigeria

With its 22 million people, the Hausa is the largest ethnic group in Central Africa. The Hausa land comprises a region of more than 140,000 square kilometres within the borders of Nigeria, where they have been living for more than 1,000 years.

The Absurdity of Violence

49

Violence can only be concealed by a lie, and the lie can only be maintained by violence.

Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn

(1918-) Russian historian, poet, playwright and novelist. His themes are the Gulags: the Soviet work camps. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1970 and was exiled in 1974.

50

War is a coward's escape from the problems of peace.

Thomas Mann

(1875-1955) German writer, a naturalised American, author of *The Magic Mountain* and winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1929.

51

War is, at first, the hope that one will be better off; next, the expectation that the other fellow will be worse off; then, the satisfaction that he isn't any better off; and, finally, the surprise at everyone's being worse off.

Karl Kraus

(1874-1936) Austrian writer. He was the most critical, satirical and scathing intellectual in Vienna at the beginning of the 20th century. He condemned the failings of the middle classes and of hallowed artistic and literary media.

52

And violence is impractical, because the old eye for an eye philosophy ends up leaving everybody blind... It is immoral because it is a descending spiral ending in destruction for everybody.

Martin Luther King

(1929-1968) An activist in the Civil Rights' Movement for Afro-Americans in the United States, he won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1964. He organised and carried out marches for the right to vote, non-discrimination and other basic civil rights.

53

No weapon has ever settled a moral problem. It can impose a solution but it cannot guarantee it to be a just one.

Ernest Hemingway

(1899-1961) American writer and journalist. He won the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1954.

Peace as a Process

54

The pursuit of peace and progress cannot end in a few years in either victory or defeat. The pursuit of peace and progress, with its trials and errors, its successes and setbacks, can never be relaxed and never abandoned.

Dag Hammarskjold

(1905-1961) (Sweden) He was Secretary General of the United Nations (UN) between April 1953 and 18 September 1961, when he died in an accident during a trip to mediate in the Katanga conflict between Zaire and the Belgian Congo.

55

Any intelligent fool can make things bigger, more complex, and more violent. It takes a touch of genius —and a lot of courage— to move in the opposite direction.

Albert Einstein

(1879-1955) Born in Germany and nationalised in the United States in 1940, he is the best-known and most important scientist of the 20th century. In 1905, as an unknown young physicist employed in the Patents Office in Berne (Switzerland), he published his Theory of Special Relativity.

56

If there is to be peace in the world,
There must be peace in the nations.
If there is to be peace in the nations,
There must be peace in the cities.
If there is to be peace in the cities,
There must be peace between neighbours.
If there is to be peace between neighbours,
There must be peace in the home.
If there is to be peace in the home,
There must be peace in the heart.

Tao Te Ching Chapter XLIX

Taoism is a word derived from a character of the Chinese alphabet which is read as 'Tao'. This term is often interpreted as "way" or "path" but it goes far beyond this and could be better understood as "intuition, sensitivity, spontaneity, life" or, in a more abstract way, as "sense". Taoism is first a philosophy and secondly a religion. It conceives the universe as a balance of forces and emphasises the intimate relationship between people and nature. It was developed from the *Tao Te Ching*, a philosophical theory based on the writings of Lao Tzu (6th century B.C.).

...which begins from the inside

57

Five enemies of peace inhabit with us —avarice, ambition, envy, anger, and pride—; if these were to be banished, we should infallibly enjoy perpetual peace.

Petrarca

(1304-1374) Italian writer and humanist, whose poetry influenced authors such as Lope de Vega, Francisco de Quevedo, Luis de Góngora, William Shakespeare and Edmund Spenser.

58

We frail humans are at one time capable of the greatest good and, at the same time, capable of the greatest evil. Change will only come about when each of us takes up the daily struggle ourselves to be more forgiving, compassionate, loving, and above all joyful in the knowledge that, by some miracle of grace, we can change as those around us can change too.

Mairead Corrigan

(1944-) (Belfast) Co-founder, with Betty Williams, of the Community of Peace People, an organization that attempted to find peaceful solutions to the armed conflict in Northern Ireland. In 1976 she received the Nobel Peace Prize with Betty Williams.

59

Productive work, love and thought are possible only if a person can be, when necessary, quiet and alone. To be able to listen to oneself is the necessary condition for relating oneself to others.

Erich Fromm

(1900-1980) Distinguished German social psychologist and humanist.

60

If in our daily life we can smile, if we can be peaceful and happy, not only we, but everyone will profit from it. This is the most basic kind of peace work.

Thich Nhat Hahn

(1926-) Buddhist monk and peace activist for more than four decades, nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for this reason. A political refugee in France since 1972, due to his pacifist stance, which began during the Vietnam War.

Peace and Action

61

In our innermost Spirit —we nourish the gentleness and understanding of Peace. Those around us feel a gentle breeze whispering as if rustling leaves —Peace comes not from contemplation— but action!

Pauline Tangiora

Maori from Aotearoa (New Zealand). She was the first female representative on the World Council for Indigenous Peoples.

62

Peace is not the absence of conflict but the presence of creative alternatives for responding to conflict.

Dorothy Thompson

(1893-1961) An American journalist considered by "The Times" (1938) as one of the two most influential women in the United States. She was the first journalist to be expelled by Nazi Germany.

63

Indifference widens the gaps that divide. Charity stretches out its hands to all and thus, imperceptibly, as does an earthquake, brings worlds together.

Andrea Riccardi

Founder and President of the Community of Sant'Egidio.

64

The greatest danger to our future is apathy.

Jane Goodall

English naturalist and primatologist, who has dedicated her life to the study of the behaviour of chimpanzees in Africa.

65

The hottest places in hell are reserved for those who, in times of great moral crisis, maintain their neutrality.

Dante

(1265–1321) Florentine poet. His masterpiece, *The Divine Comedy*, produced in Europe during the Middle Ages, is considered one of the greatest works of world literature.

Peace and Ethics

66

Nonviolence is not a garment to be put on and off at will. Its seat is in the heart, and it must be an inseparable part of our being.

Mahatma Gandhi

(1869-1948) Indian thinker and politician. He established new means of combat and, in his manifestos, rejected armed struggle and preached non-violence. He advocated total loyalty to the dictates of one's conscience, even to go as far as civil disobedience if necessary. He kept up a correspondence with Leo Tolstoy, who was an influence in his concept of non-violent resistance.

67

There is surely an awful inequality between the forces that proclaim the need for wars and the moral forces that defend the right to peace; however, it is also certain that nothing throughout history can overcome the will of people, apart from the will of others.

José Saramago

(1922-) Portuguese writer, journalist and playwright, winner of the Nobel Prize for Literature in 1998.

68

Peace, in the sense of the absence of war, is of little value to someone who is dying of hunger or cold. It will not remove the pain of torture inflicted on a prisoner of conscience. It does not comfort those who have lost their loved ones in floods caused by senseless deforestation in a neighbouring country. Peace can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free.

Tenzin Gyatso

(1935-) At the age of five, he was proclaimed as the incarnation of the deceased thirteenth Dalai Lama. After the invasion of Tibet by the Chinese army, on his fifteenth birthday, 17 November 1950, he was declared head of the government in exile. He was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize in 1989, for his continued resistance to the use of violence in the struggle of his people to regain their liberty, making the whole world aware of the conflict in Tibet and the situation in his country. He is a member of the Committee of Honour of the International Coordination for the Decade of non-violence and peace.

69

We can work together for a better world with men and women of goodwill, those who radiate the intrinsic goodness of humankind. To do so effectively, the world needs a global ethic with values which give meaning to life experiences and, more than religious institutions and dog-

MEETING POINTS

mas, sustain the non-material dimension of humanity. Mankind's universal values of love, compassion, solidarity, caring and tolerance should form the basis for this global ethic which should permeate culture, politics, trade, religion and philosophy. It should also permeate the extended family of the United Nations.

Wangari Maathai

(1940-) Kenyan political activist and ecologist. She received the Nobel Peace Prize in 2004 for her "contributions to sustainable development, democracy and peace". She is the first African woman to receive this award.

Peace and Justice

70

I swore never to be silent whenever human beings endure suffering and humiliation. We must always take sides. Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.

Elie Weisel

(1928-) Romanian writer, survivor of the Nazi concentration camps, he has dedicated his whole life to writing and speaking about the horrors of the Holocaust, with the resolute aim of avoiding a similar barbarity happening again in the world. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1986.

71

How can one not speak about war, poverty, and inequality when people who suffer from these afflictions don't have a voice to speak?

Isabel Allende

(1942-) Chilean writer and playwright. She is considered the most popular Latin American novelist. She has sold more than 35 million books and her work has been translated into more than 27 languages. She is the daughter of Tomás Allende, diplomatic official and first cousin of Salvador Allende.

72

Any definition of a culture of peace must address the problem of achieving justice for communities and individuals who do not have the means to compete or cope without structured assistance and compassionate help.

Mahnaz Afkhami

Founder and President, Women's Learning Partnership and Executive Director, Foundation for Iranian Studies. Former Iranian minister of state for women's affairs. Exiled in the United States, she has been a distinguished defender of women's rights for more than three decades, having founded and worked as director and president of various international non-governmental organisations, dedicated to the promotion of the status of women.

73

A society becomes more brutalised with the habitual use of punishment than with repetition of crimes.

Oscar Wilde

(1854-1900) Irish writer, poet and playwright. One of the most distinguished playwrights of late Victorian London; he was also a celebrity of his day, due to his outstanding barbed wit.

74

If we want a world of peace and justice, we need to be decisive in putting intelligence at the service of love.

Antoine de Saint-Exupery

(1900-1944) French writer and aviator, author of *The Little Prince*. He studied at the University of Freiburg.

Peace and Love

75

If you want to make peace with your enemy, you have to work with your enemy. Then he becomes your partner.

Nelson Mandela

(1918-) First president of South Africa to be elected by democratic means under universal suffrage. Before being elected as president, he was an important activist against apartheid and was imprisoned for 27 years. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1993.

76

Love, by its very nature, is unworldly, and it is for this reason rather than its rarity that it is not only apolitical but anti-political, perhaps the most powerful of all anti-political human forces.

Hannah Arendt

(1906-1975) German political theorist. In her works, she deals with the nature of power and themes such as politics, authority, totalitarianism in general and the Holocaust. Her fine analyses on the society around her made her one of the greatest thinkers of all time.

77

I believe that the love of truth is the basis of all virtues and that virtues based on lies can only cause harm.

Bertrand Russell

(1872-1970) Nobel Prize for Literature in 1950, he was one of the most distinguished philosophers and mathematicians of the twentieth century.

He wrote on a wide variety of themes, from the fundamentals of mathematics and the theory of relativity to marriage, women's rights and pacifism. In 1962, at the age of 90, he mediated in the Cuban Missile Crisis to avoid a military attack being triggered. With Albert Einstein, he organised a manifesto that gave rise to the Pugwash Conferences, in face of the threat of nuclear war.

78

At some ideas you stand perplexed, especially at the sight of human sins, uncertain whether to combat it by force or by human love. Always decide, "I will combat it with human love." If you make up your mind about that once and for all, you can conquer the whole world. Loving humility is a terrible force; it is the strongest of all things and there is nothing like it.

Fyodor Dostoyevsky - The Brothers Karamazov

(1821-1881) Russian 19th century novelist. He is considered as one of the greatest writers in Russian literature and is recognised by some as the founder of the Existentialist movement. His *The Brothers Karamazov* is considered a literary masterpiece and one of the greatest novels ever written.

79

The improvement of life was only accomplished to the extent to which it was based on a change of consciousness, that is, to the extent to which the law of violence was replaced in men's consciousness by the law of love.

Leo Tolstoy

(1828-1910) Extremely influential Russian novelist in his country's literature and politics. Together with Fyodor Dostoyevsky, he was one of the giants of 19th century Russian literature. His best-known works are *War and Peace* and *Anna Karenina*.

80

We cannot change the past, but we can change our attitude toward it. Uproot guilt and plant forgiveness. Tear out arrogance and seed humility. Exchange love for hate —thereby, making the present comfortable and the future promising.

Maya Angelou

(1928-) American poet, essayist and actress, an important figure in the American Civil Rights Movement.

Peace brings peace

Peace brings peace
Peace is the way to peace.
Peace brings peace
The plant of peace comes
from mutual understanding:
its roots are respect,
and acceptance its flower.

Bitoriano Gandiaga